

Indiana Department of Correction Presents \$19,054.24 and School Supplies to Foster Children

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Project Backpack helps more than 500 Hoosier foster kids kick-off the 2006 school year in style



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J. David Donahue, Commissioner

Puntnamville, Indiana - (August 10, 2006) - As summer begins to wind down, young people across

Indiana are getting ready to trade their pool bags for book bags. A group of special foster children are getting help filling those bags with back-to-school essentials from a seemingly unlikely neighbor-Indiana Department of Correction staff and offenders.

Last year, the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) Project Backpack raised more than \$6,400 in funds and school supplies to benefit The Villages, Indiana's largest non-for-profit therapeutic foster care provider. The 2006 award-\$19,054.24-is triple the Department's collective efforts and commitment to kids and education.

"The Department of Correction strives to give back to the communities in which we live and operate," said J. David Donahue, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction. "Staff and offenders have shown an exceptional commitment to The Villages and I am proud of their efforts. "

"The resources provided by IDOC will help more than 500 of The Villages school-aged foster children with classroom essentials," said Sharon Pierce, President and CEO of The Villages.

"We strive to keep our children excited about learning, but we also recognize that for many of our foster children, school is a struggle," said Pierce. "To start the year with the right supplies could make a real difference."

The partnership between The Villages and IDOC is actually very natural-many children are admitted into the foster care system as a result of their parents' incarceration.

All 32 of Indiana's correctional facilities and 8 parole districts hosted fundraisers, collected school supplies and purchased new backpacks to support this effort.

At Indiana State Prison, the staff had white elephant sales where people bring in unique items to sell. Within the prison, inmates belonging to the Jaycee's and the American Legion hosted cookouts for the staff to raise money. In addition, numerous offenders sewed 200 backpacks, which were donated to The Villages to aid local foster children.

Staff at Wabash Valley Correctional Facility sold pizza to raise funds for Project Backpack. The Purposeful Living Units Serve (PLUS), a faith and character-based re-entry program for prisoners, held a walkathon and contributed their donations. In addition to money raised, offenders and staff filled two barrels full of school materials and donated them to Project Backpack.

"At The Villages, our first priority is to provide vulnerable children with a caring adult and a loving family setting. But it is also important for us to open doors for a positive educational experience," said Pierce. "Project Backpack helps make this possible, and we are deeply indebted to Commissioner Donahue's leadership and staff at the Department of Correction for their help."

For more information on Project Backpack or the programs and services of The Villages, visit www.

villageskids.org or call 1-800-874-6880.

About The Villages

The Villages is Indiana's largest nonprofit child and family services agency, with more than 28 years of experience working throughout Indiana to ensure that children who have been abused, abandoned or neglected can be raised in a loving family setting. In addition to foster care and adoption, current services include: Healthy Families services, individual and group counseling, child care services, family preservation and reunification services, and independent and transitional living services.





About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.